



San Diego City Attorney **CASEY GWINN**

NEWS RELEASE

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**POPPERS, SPARKLERS & FIRECRACKERS!
IT'S NO CHILD'S PLAY—SERIOUS INJURIES FOR LIFE!**
*Joint News Conference: City Attorney's Office, UCSD Burn Center,
San Diego Fire and Life Safety Services & Metro Arson Strike Team*

San Diego, CA: ALL fireworks are illegal, unpredictable, and cause serious injuries for life. And sellers—will be prosecuted! That's the message sent out to parents, potential users of fireworks, and vendors at a joint news conference held today by the San Diego City Attorney's Office, San Diego Fire and Life Safety Services, Metro Arson Strike Team, and University of California at San Diego Regional Burn Center. "Parents beware: accidents and injuries can and do result from children playing with small fireworks," said San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn. "Dangerous fireworks have been sold from seemingly safe venues, the local candy store and the ice cream truck. Here in the City of San Diego, we have a zero tolerance for businesses that sell fireworks. It is a crime to sell, buy, possess or explode fireworks. "

Just this year, the City Attorney's Office resolved a criminal complaint against a candy store owner who sold firecrackers to an 8-year-old boy from Logan Heights. The boy purchased about twenty small firecrackers from his neighborhood candy store, Dulceria Azteca. The boy lit one of the firecrackers, but when it did not ignite, he put it in his pant's pocket with the other 19 firecrackers. Moments later the dud exploded in his pocket and ignited all of the other small fireworks.

"The young boy was hospitalized at the UCSD Regional Burn Center and treated for second and third degree burns on his back and legs," said Dan Lozano, M.D., Clinical Director of the

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July 4th Fireworks

UCSD Regional Burn Center. “The boy is left with permanent scarring and will continue to undergo surgeries in the future. Burn injuries last a lifetime.”

The San Diego City Attorney prosecuted the owner of the candy store, Brenda Ramirez, a 28-year-old woman from Otay Mesa for selling the fireworks to the boy. This crime carries a maximum sentence of one year in jail and \$1,000 fine. Last December, Ms. Ramirez pleaded guilty to selling fireworks. She was placed on three years probation and must pay \$600 in fines and complete 100 hours of community service at a local burn center. Also, law enforcement officers are permitted to periodically search her candy store for fireworks.

Last year, the San Diego Police Department received a tip from the faculty and students of a Mid City school that someone was selling fireworks to children out of an ice cream truck. A few days later, Chi Van Huynh, a 30-year-old man from San Diego, who operated an ice cream truck in the Mid-City area, was caught with fireworks in his truck. He pleaded guilty to a fireworks charge last November.

Fireworks are especially a concern this year because of the dry weather. The fire service is expecting the worst fire season in forty years. San Diego Deputy Fire Chief Tom Clark said, “Something as small as one firecracker can have severe consequences, such as starting a fire with the potential to burn property and people, including the firefighters who fight the fire.”

It is a crime to possess fireworks in San Diego County. The prohibition includes small snap caps and poppers since July 2001. Even sparklers are illegal in San Diego County. The Ramirez case demonstrates that one small firecracker can cause terrible injuries. “Fireworks represent an extraordinary hazard,” said Captain Jeff Carle of the Metro Arson Strike Team. “These kinds of fires and injuries are completely preventable. In addition, disposal of these items represents the

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most common hazard faced by our Explosive Device Technicians.”

Residents of the City of San Diego may take fireworks to their local fire station for disposal by the City's Metro Arson Strike Team. In the City of San Diego, when an incident involves suspicious fireworks or explosive devices, the Metro Arson Strike Team is called to the scene. MAST is made up of investigators from the Fire and Life Safety Services Department; Police Department; U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; and U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations. MAST was involved in the investigation of the Ramirez case.

The news conference was held at the Regional Public Safety Training Facility where MAST demonstrated the dangerous “fire-power” contained from different types of fireworks.

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